

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to allow me to speak in support of S.B. No. 930 - An Act Concerning the School Entrance Age. I retired in June of this year after thirty five years of teaching from the Mansfield Public Schools where I taught kindergarten, first grade, and gifted and talented. Since I left kindergarten in 1997 and moved to grade one, huge changes have occurred. With NCLB kindergarten is the new first grade. In order for the children to "do well on the tests", what used to be taught in grade one is now taught in kindergarten and most of the younger children, with birthdays after September 1 are not developmentally mature enough to successfully do this work. This leads to our achievement gap and students who are not proficient on our CT Mastery Tests. As a state we need to start with our children at birth to solve this problem. We must provide a strong Birth to Three Program that identifies and addresses problems early on, universal public preschool for three and four year olds whose parents can't afford a private setting and strong K-12 program which begins when children are developmentally ready to learn. Perhaps the proposed Department of Early Childhood Education could coordinate and provide preschool programs for the children who are too young to begin kindergarten. There are many programs in place like Care for Kids and Head Start. It is important that these children, especially the low-income and at risk children have preschool opportunities in lieu of attending kindergarten. If we send them to kindergarten too early, some of these children will be retained in grades K, 1 and 2 or be diagnosed with ADHD when they are only young! We must also commit to make universal preschool a priority in the coming years.

We are the only state that has a cut off of January 1. My internet search, which may not be completely accurate, revealed that thirty seven states require that students be five years old before October 15 with twenty four states by September 1. California, Maryland and Rhode Island have recently changed to September 1 from their December cutoff dates. Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont leave the date to the discretion of local boards of education. With the changes in the federal and state expectations of our youngest students, we must allow them to enter school developmentally mature enough to fully participate and succeed throughout their years of education and become life-long lovers of learning. I believe that as these children, who are ready to begin kindergarten, move through the grades the state of Connecticut will see our tests scores improve and perhaps our achievement gap will decrease.

Thank you for your consideration. Does anyone have any questions?

Respectfully submitted,



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